



Smarter Lunchrooms

Professional Standards Learning Code: 4160 Smarter Lunchroom Techniques
Division of School and Community Nutrition
Kentucky Department of Education



Objectives



By the end of this presentation, you will

- ▶ Have a clear understanding of what is a smarter lunchroom.
- ▶ Learn how to complete a self-assessment of your school cafeteria and identify ways to incorporate Smarter Lunchroom techniques.
- ▶ Learn various strategies to increase student participation and make meals more appealing.

Smarter Lunchroom Overview

The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement was established as part of the Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs Center at Cornell University, in 2010, through a grant from the USDA.

It used behavioral economics, the science of how environmental cues influence decision-making, to promote healthy choices in the school lunchrooms.



The Smarter Lunchroom initiative seeks to:

- ▶ Nudge students to make smarter, healthier choices.
- ▶ Increase sales and participation and reduces food waste.
- ▶ Implement low-cost/no-cost strategies.
- ▶ Keep a variety of food choices without eliminating or only raising prices of less healthy food.

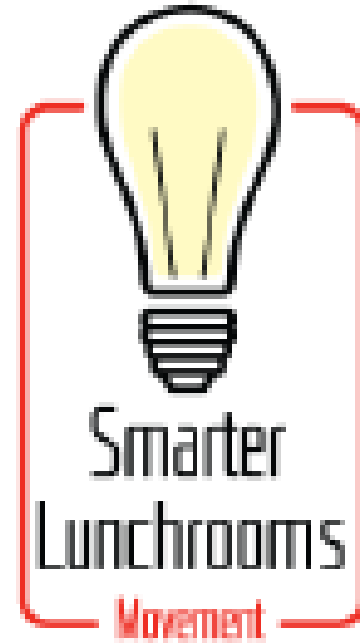


Smarter Lunchrooms strategies are

- ▶ Evidence-based,
- ▶ Simple,
- ▶ And no cost or low-cost.

Smarter Lunchrooms helps schools

- ▶ Evaluate the lunchroom,
- ▶ Determine what they are doing well,
- ▶ And identify opportunities for improvement.



Why Create Smarter Lunchrooms?

The goal of the NLSP and SBP is to provide children with nutritious meals that combat childhood hunger and obesity.



HHFKA

HHFKA addresses these problems by meeting children's nutrition needs.

Meals are only nutritious when students eat them.

Smarter Lunchrooms helps schools by promoting healthy choices and encouraging selection.



Cafeteria Environment Influences Student Choices

School nutrition programs need to promote a specific image to bring in and keep their customers.

SL help schools create a positive cafeteria environment that encourages student participation.



School food service staff plays a critical role in influencing what students choose to eat each day.

How staff serve and interact with students determines if and what they buy.



Smarter Lunchroom strategies help structure the cafeteria environment so it encourages students to:

- ▶ **Increase selections of reimbursable school meals;**
- ▶ **Increase selections of healthy foods; and**
- ▶ **Select healthier a la carte options.**





Positive attitudes are key to success.

Positive staff attitudes, communication, and messaging are critical to creating an environment that promotes healthy eating.

Keep the goal of school meals in mind! Have a positive attitude about making changes to help students eat healthy.

STEPS FOR CHANGE

Getting Started

1. Identify a Smarter Lunchroom Leadership Team
2. Assess the Cafeteria
3. Prioritize Needs and Develop an Action Plan
4. Identify Resources
5. Educate and Train Staff
6. Implement Smarter Lunchroom Strategies
7. Build Awareness and Support
8. Evaluate and Maintain



Steps for Change

Smarter Lunchroom helps schools make simple changes that can have a big impact.

The following steps help programs be successful with developing, implementing, and evaluating local SL strategies.



Getting Started

- ▶ **Assess**
- ▶ **Start small**
- ▶ **Enlist help**
- ▶ **Connect**
- ▶ **Collaborate**



Assess

Assess the current practices and consider what changes can be made to improve environment.

Focus on offering choices, and making healthy foods more visible and convenient for students to choose.



Smart Small

Identify one or two things that can be done right now.

Build upon small steps.



Enlist

Enlist school staff members and students to help with different strategies.



Connect

Connect SL to existing school programs and collaborations such as:

- ▶ Healthier US School Challenge,
- ▶ Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs,
- ▶ Farm to School,
- ▶ Fuel Up to Play 60, and
- ▶ Chefs Move to School.



Collaborate

Collaborate with:

- ▶ Professional health organizations
- ▶ Wellness groups
- ▶ Community organizations
- ▶ Local business

to obtain needed resources and support.



Step 1: Identify a Smarter Lunchrooms Leadership Team

Develop a collaborative approach that includes partnerships between food service and school staff.



A local school leadership team helps to:

- ▶ Evaluate operations and identify priority areas;
- ▶ Develop an action plan;
- ▶ Identify resources;
- ▶ Implement changes;
- ▶ Promote awareness and buy-in;
- ▶ Monitor implementations; and
- ▶ Evaluate progress.



Who should be included?

At a minimum, the team should consist of the food service director, cafeteria manager and school principal.



Step 2: Assess the Cafeteria

Start with a cafeteria walk-through to see things from students' perspectives.

Some things to consider include:

- ▶ What is the first thing you see – what draws your attention?
- ▶ Which foods are most convenient and least convenient?
- ▶ Is the serving line set-up customer friendly?



Smarter Lunchroom Score Card

There are three primary parts to the Smarter Lunchroom Scorecard:

The Smarter Lunchroom Score Card is completed to evaluate what is good and opportunities for improvement.

The Smarter Lunchroom Scorecard Summary is completed alongside the scorecard to provide a quick snapshot of the results.

Frequently Asked Questions



Photograph!

Take photographs as part of the cafeteria assessment.

Take the photographs from students' eye level.



Photo Checklist

B.E.N. Center Photo Checklist *

Take photographs before and after implementing the Smarter Lunchrooms makeover, customizing this list to suit your lunchroom space. Try to frame the same shots each time to get the clearest before/after comparison. Take photographs when food is on the line, and from students' eye level. For legal reasons, collect signed consent forms or avoid photographing students. Ask before photographing adults.



Exterior/Approach to Lunchroom and Common Spaces

- ☐ Exterior/approach to lunchroom and common spaces"
- ☐ Doorways
- ☐ Wall space and bulletin boards
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Stations or tables in common space, e.g., lost and found or student groups
- ☐ Show traffic flow patterns (entering, lining up and exiting)
- ☐ Anywhere cleaning items are stored, such as mops, buckets and cloths
- ☐ Garbage, recycling and composting

Serving Lines

Complete for each line

- ☐ Overall view of area – "first glance"
- ☐ Counters
- ☐ Walls, especially where students line up
- ☐ Any decorations or signs, including posted menus and promotions
- ☐ Hot foods serving area
- ☐ Cold foods serving area
- ☐ Snacks/chips/cookies area
- ☐ Cooler, open and shut
- ☐ Freezer, open and shut
- ☐ Milk serving area
- ☐ Condiments
- ☐ Any other food or beverage serving area
- ☐ Registers, alone and with surrounding counter and walls
- ☐ Tray storage
- ☐ Cutlery storage

Snack Window

- ☐ Overall view of area – "first glance"
- ☐ Walls and counter spaces, especially where students line up to wait
- ☐ Any decorations or signs, including posted menus and promotional materials
- ☐ Any food or beverage visible to students
- ☐ Any used or unused wall space (outside or inside window) visible to students
- ☐ Register and surrounding view
- ☐ Condiments
- ☐ Tray storage
- ☐ Cutlery storage

Dining Area

Can be done before or after a lunch period, to avoid photographing students

- ☐ Overall view of area – "first glance"
- ☐ Tabletops
- ☐ Seats
- ☐ Wall spaces, used or unused
- ☐ Signs
- ☐ Garbage areas
- ☐ Cutlery storage

Optional Staff Areas

- ☐ Wall space, used or unused
- ☐ Work stations

* Smarter Lunchrooms Movement and the B.E.N. Center.



Use Existing Data

Use existing cafeteria data to determine potential areas for improvement, and identify appropriate Smarter Lunchroom strategies.



Collaborate with Other Schools

Consider collaborations with other schools and districts to assess the cafeteria and share strategies for success.



Step 3: Prioritize Needs and Develop an Action Plan

The Smarter Lunchrooms strategies are intervention principles that can be customized and adapted for a variety of cafeteria environments. Use the cafeteria's goals to determine the needed strategies.



Cafeteria Goals

Examples of goals might include:

- ▶ Increasing participation in reimbursable meals;
- ▶ Increasing students' consumption of vegetables or fruits;
- ▶ Increasing students' consumption of white milk;
- ▶ Increasing students' consumption of targeted entrees;
- ▶ Decreasing plate wastes; and
- ▶ Reducing food cost.



A Smarter Lunchrooms Action Plan



Strategy: *Focus on Fruit – Make fruit available at two or more locations on the serving line, including the POS.*

Intent: To offer additional opportunities for students to self-select a fruit, which helps meet reimbursable meal criteria and increases the likelihood of fruit consumption.

Challenge: The cafeteria does not have additional space on the serving line or at the POS.

Solution: Use a moveable cart with attractive fruit displays next to the POS or just inside the serving line right before the steam table. Students will see the fruit first, and be more likely to select it.



Step 4: Identify Resources

Identify the resources needed to implement the Smarter Lunchroom strategies.

Materials could include:

- ▶ Smarter Lunchrooms education and training materials,
- ▶ nutrition education materials,
- ▶ signage,
- ▶ serving line display equipment



Smarter Lunchroom Materials

The BEN Center's [Smarter Lunchrooms](#) website provides many resources.

Information on SL research is available on [Cornell's Food and Brand Lab](#) website.

Other resources include:

- ▶ Cornell B.E.N. Center: <http://ben.dyson.cornell.edu/>
- ▶ Cornell Food and Brand Lab YouTube Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/user/FoodandBrandLab>
- ▶ Smarter Lunchroom Video Tips: <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/more-videos>
- ▶ Smarter Lunchroom Movement No Time to Train: <https://smarterlunchrooms.org/training-materials>



Signage and Posters

Menu boards and signage materials are available from a variety of commercial suppliers. Many nutrition education posters are available at low cost. You can even create your own!



Display Equipment and Supplies

Check with the school's local equipment distributor for food display equipment and supplies such as attractive linens, colorful bowls and trays, tiered metal baskets and clear plastic frames.

Other sources include local craft stores, department stores, discount stores and thrift stores.



Funding

Look for potential local funding sources such as the school's PTA/PTO, district organizations and local businesses. Consider local, state and federal grant opportunities such as Fuel Up to Play 60 and SUDIA.



Step 5: Educate and Train School Staff

Buy-in and support from the following people are critical to successful implementation of a SL makeover:

- ▶ Food service director;
- ▶ Cafeteria managers;
- ▶ Food service staff (including all servers, cashiers and general workers who will be implementing the school's SL strategies); and
- ▶ Building administrators, such as principals and assistant principals.



Staff Buy-In is Critical!

It is important that staff

- ▶ understand why the changes are being made,
- ▶ how they will benefit both students and food service staff, and
- ▶ how to implement them.

Cafeteria staff buy-in is critical to successful implementation. Include site staff in the planning process, and provide opportunities for their input.



Everyone is Important!

- ▶ The food service director and cafeteria manager set the tone for success.
- ▶ Staff training is critical for success.
- ▶ Administrative support is a key determining factor of how well the cafeteria implements their Smarter Lunchrooms strategies.



Step 6: Implement Smarter Lunchroom Strategies

Use the cafeteria's action plan to implement the planned changes. Schools can begin implementing strategies at any time during the school year.

If doing an extensive makeover, consider starting at the beginning of the school year or after a school break.

Remember to keep it fresh!



Step 7: Build Awareness and Support

Educating the school community about Smarter Lunchrooms helps build support.



Step 8: Evaluate and Maintain

The food service director and cafeteria manager should regularly review whether the day-to-day operations are consistent with the chosen SL strategies. Evaluations determine how well the strategies are implemented, and if they are working.



Evaluation Plan

A good evaluation plan does not need to be extensive or complicated.

It could include:

- ▶ Surveys of students, parents and staff;
- ▶ Meal participation rates;
- ▶ Food waste; and
- ▶ Purchases of la carte sales



Promote Success

Be proud of the successes by sharing the results!



6 PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVING EATING BEHAVIORS

- ▶ Manage portion sizes
- ▶ Increase convenience
- ▶ Improve visibility
- ▶ Enhance taste expectations
- ▶ Use suggestive selling
- ▶ Set smart pricing strategies



1. Manage Portion Sizes

- ▶ Limit portion sizes of less healthy foods such as cookies, chips and other snack foods.
- ▶ Food service staff can portion healthy foods to ensure meal pattern compliance and speed up the serving line.



2. Increase Convenience

Make healthy foods more convenient by using the following techniques:

- ▶ Put healthy foods by the cash register.
- ▶ Offer pre-packed hot and cold healthy lunch alternatives on all serving lines.
- ▶ Make healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables self-serve, whenever possible.



3. Improve Visibility

Use visibility to encourage healthy choices and discourage less healthy choices.

Use:

- ▶ Containers
 - At students' eye level
 - Within reach
 - In areas of high traffic
 - Move to the beginning of the line, in front of other foods
 - Go vertical with tiered baskets and shelving
- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Signage



Out of sight, out of mind!



Out of sight, out of mind! Research shows that simply seeing foods such as brownies or cookies can lead to unplanned consumption. When unhealthy foods are out of sight, people are much less likely to eat them because they are not thinking about them.



Conversely, highly visible healthy food options can lead to increased consumption of healthier foods. For example, people are more likely to eat carrot sticks when they are pre-cut and stored in a clear container in the refrigerator. School nutrition programs can apply this strategy to the cafeteria by making healthy foods more visible.

4. Enhance Taste Expectations

Taste expectations are the perception of what a food will taste like based on its description and appearance.

Names, appearance and reputation create expectations.

- ▶ People eat with their eyes first.
- ▶ Name foods.
- ▶ Display creative names.
- ▶ Use displays, posters, bulletin boards and other colorful messages
- ▶ Use suggestive selling.



Name That Veggie!

Some examples of creative food names for elementary and secondary menus-

Elementary:

X-ray vision carrots

Power peas

Glow-in-the-dark greens

Dinosaur broccoli trees

Bandit beans

Mighty melons

Celery swords

Secondary:

Succulent summer corn

Crisp celery and carrot sticks

Farm-fresh tomatoes

Crunchy red apples

Zesty zucchini

Garlic green beans

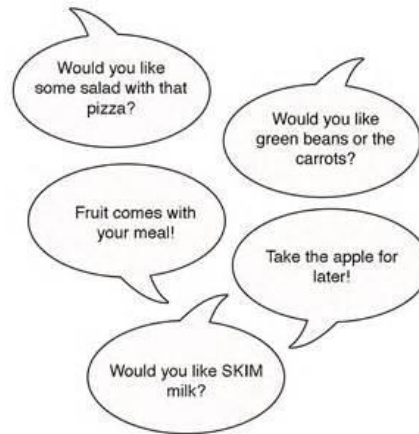
Roasted vegetable medley



5. Use Suggestive Selling

Cafeteria staff can influence food decisions towards selecting healthier options.

Be positive!



6. Set Smart Pricing Strategies

- ▶ Bundling to encourage healthy food choices and increase students' selection of reimbursable meals.
- ▶ Use a la carte pricing strategies to make school meals the best deal.



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS



Three Key Behavioral Concepts:

1. Location
2. Visibility
3. Choice

Increasing Students' Selection of:

- ▶ Fruits
- ▶ Vegetables
- ▶ Targeted entrees
- ▶ White milk
- ▶ Reimbursable meals



Smarter Lunchroom Strategies


A large number of Smarter Lunchroom strategies can be implemented in your school in less than 30 minutes at no cost. These strategies include:

- ▶ Creatively naming fruits, vegetables and healthy entrees,
- ▶ Highlighting healthy menu items on menu boards outside of the cafeteria,
- ▶ And displaying fruit options in multiple places in the serving line.



Increasing Students' Selection of FRUITS



Strategy 1	Why It Works	How to Do it	Cost
<p>Display fruit in at least two locations per line, including near the cash register.</p> 	<p>Students often overlook fruit because it is hard to see and reach, hidden under a sneeze guard in a drab metal bin.</p> <p>Move fruit into the spotlight! Increasing students' exposure to fruit increases the likelihood they see it, which increases their chances of taking and eating it.</p>	<p>Make fruit available at least twice along the lunch line, either by repeating options or by offering two or more options in different places.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible locations include on a salad bar, in a cooler, on a snack rack and beside the register. Display canned fruit and fresh fruit separately. Highlight fruit offerings with a sign, such as "Last chance for fruit!" or "Fresh Fruit Today!" 	<p>Time: 10-30 minutes</p> <p>Money: \$0-3 (no cost to move the fruit, but possibly an expense for making the signs)</p> <p>If funds are available, consider purchasing standing plastic frames to display the signs.</p>

Focus on Fruit

At least two kinds of fruit are offered.

Think beyond apples, bananas, and oranges. Smarter Lunchrooms expose students to a wide variety of fruits including grapes, watermelon, mandarin oranges, peaches, berries, and kiwi. Make sure to offer at least two kinds each day. Fresh, frozen, dried, and canned all count!

Sliced or cut fruit is offered.

Students are more likely to eat fruit that is convenient and easy to eat. When schools slice the fruit, students eat up to two-thirds more! Slice that fruit and watch consumption soar.

A variety of mixed whole fruits are displayed in attractive bowls or baskets (instead of stainless steel pans).

Offering a beautiful variety of colorful fruit prompts students to take more. Place whole fruits in colorful bowls or baskets to make them look more appetizing and double the amount of fruit students take! Use bowls or baskets that contrast with the color of the fruit such as brightly colored ceramic or plastic mixing bowls, woven baskets, or tiered fruit stands. Mix different whole fruits together such as apples with oranges, bananas with pears, peaches with plums to emphasize variety.



Increasing Students' Selection of VEGETABLES



Strategy 1	Why It Works	How to Do it	Cost
Create a Student Nutrition Action Committee (SNAC) of students responsible for naming vegetables and creating signage.	A group of motivated students are more likely to understand what appeals to peers. Engage students to help make lunchroom changes that truly appeal to young people. An added benefit is free help to maintain your changes!	Create a SNAC of six to ten members. Give them a list of the most common vegetables served in the lunchroom and ask them to create age-appropriate names.	Time: 2-4 hours (to organize student SNAC and hold a renaming meeting) Money: \$0



Vary the Veggies

At least two kinds of vegetables are offered.

Kids are more likely to select and consume a vegetable when they have the power to choose from different options. More options will also increase the chances that each student can find at least one vegetable appealing. Each additional fruit or vegetable offered increases the number of children eating a fruit or vegetable. Make the vegetable choices impossible to miss! Use brightly colored trays, tongs, linens, or labels to add interest and visual appeals.

Vegetables are offered on all service lines.

Convenience counts! Students are far more likely to take a vegetable if its within arm's reach than if they have to travel to a second serving line or station to get it. Make room for vegetables in each service line. Be creative! If counter space is limited, consider making room in each cooler for veggie cups or bagged raw veggies. Snack windows without coolers can be accommodated by storing chilled veggies in portable cooler bags. Offer vegetables at every service area so students can easily grab them and go.



Increasing Students' Selection of TARGETED ENTREES



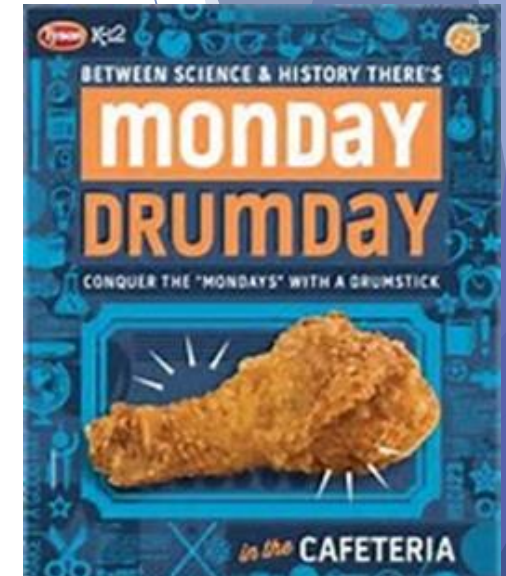
Strategy 1	Why It Works	How to Do it	Cost
<p>Make the entrée with the greatest nutrient density the first or most prominent in line.</p> <p>Nutrient-dense foods are relatively rich in nutrients for the calories contained.</p>	<p>Hungry students are more likely to select the first item they see. Use this behavior to give healthy “target entrees” an advantage.</p>	<p>Rearrange serving pans to place a targeted healthy entrée first in the serving line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place a target hot entrée first in the hot lunch serving line. Place healthy sandwiches and prepackaged salads in a prominent position by the grab-and-go window. Place less healthy snacks away from the window. For added appeal, place vegetables near the targeted hot entrée, and coordinate vegetables to complement the entrée. 	<p>Time: 5-10 minutes</p> <p>Money: \$0</p>



Usher in the Entrée


One entrée is identified as the featured entrée-of-the-day, is labeled with a creative name next to the point of selection, and is the first entrée offered. Take note! There are three things to do to achieve this Smarter Lunchroom strategy. Start by choosing the entrée you most want to promote, then give it a creative name to spark interest, and finally, make it the first entrée in the service line. Research shows that students take the first entrée significantly more than the third entrée in line. When the healthy choice is the highlighted choice, students will be more willing to buy it and eat it.

Students are offered a taste test of a new entrée at least once a year. Kids tend to stick to what they already know they like, so they may be hesitant to branch out and try new menu items. Taste testing lets them experience something different.



Increasing Students' Selection of WHITE MILK



Strategy 1	Why It Works	How to Do it	Cost
<p>Place white milk first in the milk cooler, in front of flavored milk.</p> 	<p>Students are more likely to take the first item they see if its easy to grab.</p>	<p>Reorganize the milk coolers so that white milk is in front of all flavored milk choices, and is the most visible and easiest to grab.</p> <p>Stock coolers at least 50% full of white milk.</p> <p>Use posters and decorations that encourage milk consumption.</p>	<p>Time: 5-10 minutes</p> <p>Money: \$0 (potential poster cost)</p>

Move More White Milk

Milk cases/coolers are kept full throughout meal service.

Fully-stocked displays make milk easier to find and pick up, especially for shorter students. As the lunch period progresses, keep an eye on the coolers and refill when it appears that levels are getting low.

White milk is offered in all beverage coolers.

White milk in every cooler increases the likelihood that students will see it, take it and drink it! Prominently featuring white milk in every location promotes it as the normal, default beverage of choice. Friendly reminder: add white milk to the juice and water beverage coolers.

White milk is organized and represents at least 1/3 of all milk in each designated milk cooler.

Think strength in numbers! The most highly represented choice sends the message that it is also the most normal choice, so make sure white milk represents at least 1/3 of all milk in each beverage cooler. An organized display is neater and more calming. Take care when loading the crates and cartons.



Increasing Students' Selection of REIMBURSABLE MEALS



Strategy 1	Why It Works	How to Do it	Cost
Move all competitive foods – such as chips and cookies – behind the serving counter in the regular lunch line so they are available by request only.	<p>Children and adolescents are impulsive and will frequently grab snacks even when they planned to eat a full meal. With limited funds, students end up replacing the meal with snacks rather than supplementing it. As a result, the lunchroom loses money by losing reimbursable meal sales.</p> <p>By placing snacks where they are only available by request, reimbursable meals regain the time advantage and students think twice before replacing meals with snacks. This can nudge students to make healthier choices without eliminating snacks.</p>	<p>Rearrange snack displays so students must ask for items instead of selecting them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place snack racks on table or desk behind the serving counter or hang on a back wall. For an additional health bonus, offer finger-food sides (such as raw veggie packs and whole fruits) on the same rack as snacks. Give healthier snacks the price advantage. Make healthier snacks less expensive than less healthy snacks. Avoid bundling less healthy competitive foods such as cookies. Place healthiest items at eye level and less healthy items lower. 	<p>Time: 5-15 minutes</p> <p>Money: \$0-3 (possible sign cost)</p>



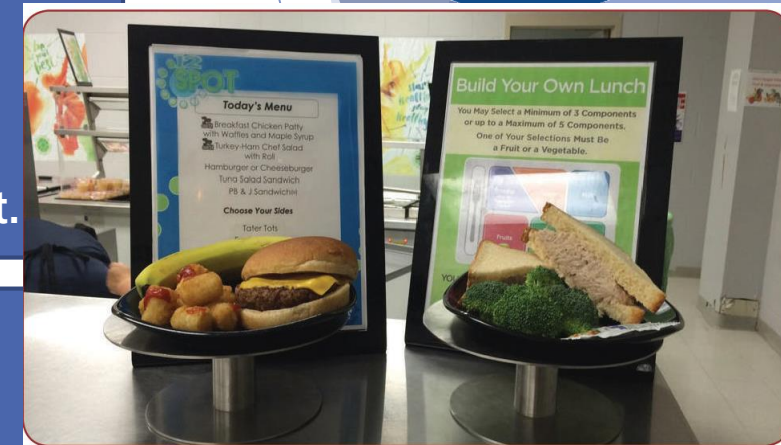
Boost Reimbursable Meals



One reimbursable meal is identified as the featured combo meal and is labeled with a creative name!

Make choices easy. Even though several items are offered, pick the ones that go together best and make it a combo meal! Feature it as one complete reimbursable meal and add special branding to make it more visible and attractive to students. Place a sign advertising all components of the combo meal next to the selected entrée on the service line. Give the meal a special name such as the Brain Boosting Meal, the Athlete's Meal, or the Focus Feast.

A (reimbursable) combo meal is offered as a grab-and-go meal. Time is precious! Many school lunch periods are short – often as little as 20 minutes, including transition time. Students want to spend as much of the time as possible eating and socializing with their friends. Leverage speed and convenience by offering a grab-and-go reimbursable meal. Pre-pack reimbursable meals in quick-service grab-and-go bags. Brand them with a name, logo, or sticker for easy identification and fun. Offer them in a speed line for faster service. This is a great way to repurpose a snack window or cart!



Smarter Lunchroom Research



THE SMARTER LUNCHROOMS MOVEMENT - IT WORKS!



↑40%

Offering vegetables in two locations can result in students taking up to **40%** more



↑54%

Holding recess before lunch can increase vegetable and fruit consumption by **54%**



↑100%

Moving fruit from a stainless steel tray to a colorful fruit bowl can **double** sales



↑30%

Giving healthy food choices fun, descriptive names - for example, calling green beans "supercharged green beans" - can increase consumption by over **30%**



↑70%

Offering sliced fruit can increase student consumption by over **70%**



↑70%

Suggesting students take a fruit can increase the number of students eating (not just taking) a fruit by as much as **70%**

The Smarter Lunchroom Movement is made possible by the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs and is funded by the USDA ERS/FNS.

<http://smarterlunchroom.org/>



Resources and Questions

- ▶ If you would like for SCN to conduct a Smarter Lunchrooms Assessment at your school, please contact your approving consultant.
- ▶ Please visit the SCN website for any additional resources.
- ▶ Please contact your SCN approving consultant for any additional questions.

Thank you!



Training Certificate

Click [here](#) to view the training certificate.

